

Practitioner's Guide:

Peace Zones



Peace Zones in Carmen, North Cotabato, Mindanao



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung



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Peace Zones

Example:

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The concept of Peace Zones as a conflict management tool has been used in the Philippines since the late 1980s, when local communities persuaded armed elements to stay out of their territory as a response to the communist insurgency and the government counterinsurgency activities. In this conflict environment and against the backdrop of the lack of progress in peace talks between the New Peoples Army (NPA) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), peace activists took local action and declared their communities as Peace Zones in locations ranging from northern Luzon to the southern Philippines.

A bi-polar and multi-dimensional set of conflicts and conflict dynamics best describes the complexity of the current conflict situation in Mindanao. Contrary to popular belief, there is not just a single "conflict" in Mindanao but there are many. The "conflict" most often referred to in Mindanao is the conflict between the Muslim population and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP). Some of the other conflicts on-going in Mindanao are equally important, these include the long-running communist insurgency (which is also relevant for parts of the Visayas and Luzon), long-running and often violent clan conflicts (locally referred to as "ridos"), terrorism, plain banditry, domestic violence and criminality. There is also plenty of potential for new conflicts in future, most notably amongst the Moro population, between Christians and Muslims, between settlers and the Indigenous People (the Lumads).

The different conflicts and the violent form in which they appear are partly interrelated and based upon the same root causes. However, the ideological reasons for the struggle vary. The struggle for self-determination is important for the Muslim population, but seems to have no priority for the Communist movement. They struggle more for general nationwide political change and classical class struggles. This differentiation regarding the motives for the armed struggle also characterises the bi-polar nature of the two main conflict lines in Mindanao: the areas affected by the struggle of the Muslim (Moro) population and the area affected by the Communist insurgency.

Following a previous improvement in the situation in Mindanao during the second half of the 1990s which resulted from the signing of a peace agreement between the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and the Philippine Government in 1996, developed the so-called 'second wave' of Peace Zones. In this context the method of Peace Zone creation has become quite common in areas affected by Muslim separatist violence and in communal conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Originally, these zones were established spontaneously by local communities, but after some years the Peace Zone strategy was also adopted by NGOs and even donor agencies.



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Grassroots Peace-building in Mindanao: The KFI Experience

The following application example refers to the development of the Peace Zone facilitated by KFI (Kadtuntaya Foundation Incorporated) through the support of GTZ-PRCT (Poverty Reduction and Conflict Transformation) Mindanao Project. The PRCT Project commenced in 2005 and supported a wide range of partner initiatives around such diverse topics as advocacy for women role and perspective in the GRP-MILF peace talks, grass roots cease-fire monitoring, micro-finance fund for Bangsamoro women, livelihood assistance for rebel returnees, peace and development planning at the community level, engaging IPs in the GRP-MILF peace process, Sports for Peace and Zones of Peace.

On the other hand, KFI is a development oriented NGO that aims to respond to the socio-economic and cultural needs of the Bangsamoro people, particularly in Central Mindanao. In the late 1990s KFI started to engage in grassroots peace-building in the context of emergency relief work in the Barangays Bual, Isulan and Sultan Kudarat. The relief work was followed by rehabilitation work and peace education to re-establish good relationships at the community level when IDPs were repatriated. As a result of these efforts the community decided to declare their barangays as Peace Zones (barangay is a sub-division below municipal and provincial level). Drawing on lessons learned from this experience, KFI replicated the new peace-building framework in the Municipality of Carmen, Province of Cotabato, where inter-communal violence among the tri-people (Moro, Indigenous Peoples and Christian settlers) was taking place as a result of the on-going conflicts between government forces and rebel groups.

In 2001 KFI implemented post-emergency livelihood, peace education and public health projects in Carmen. The Barangays of Langogan, Pebpoluan and Kimadzil were the beneficiaries of a series of relief and socio-economic rehabilitation interventions following the recurring armed confrontations between the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) beyond the all out war in 2000.



Phases and Stages of Peace Zone Initiation, Declaration, Maintaining and Sustaining

Attempts to support peace and development generally do not result in a linear straight forward process. Accordingly, also Peace Zones are usually not established in a successive process without backlashes and adjustments made along the way. However, drawing on the experience of Peace Zone creation in Carmen the following step by step approach exemplifies some general patterns that are characteristic for the application of the method. Nevertheless, it needs to be highlighted that such a gradual approach towards such a complex endeavour as peace-building needs to be adjusted in accordance with particular circumstances in each specific setting. It also has to be clarified, that there are overlaps between the different phases and stages.



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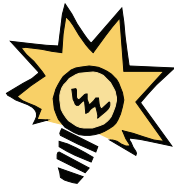
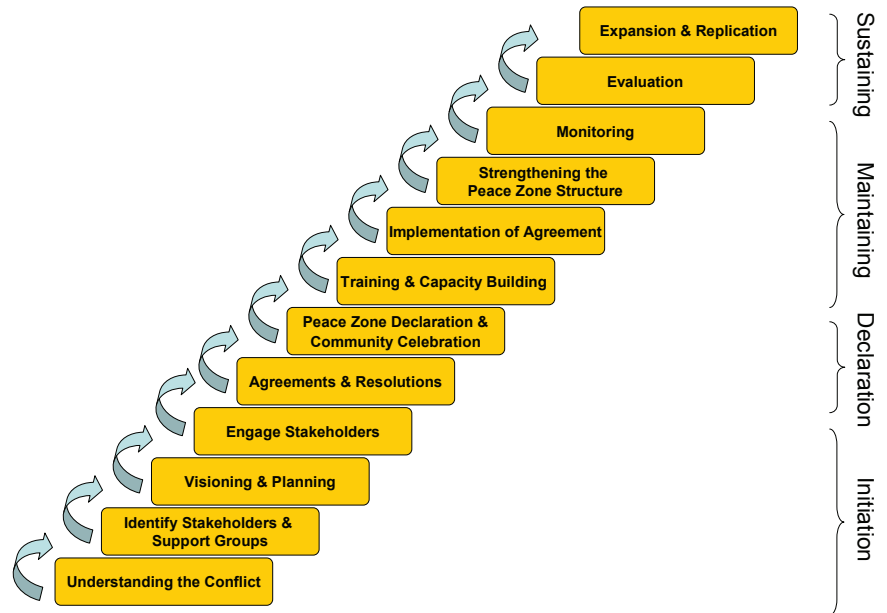


Figure 1: Steps for creating Peace Zones



A. Initiation Phase

Stage 1: Understanding the Conflict

In order to design the KFI / GTZ PRCT Mindanao Project the poverty and conflict situation in the Barangays Langogan, Pebpoluan and Kimadzil had to be analysed with focus on the historicity of the socio-political conditions and previous relations between and among different tribes.

This analysis revealed that the communities in these three barangays comprise Indigenous Peoples (IPs), Moros and Christian settlers and that the two main lines of conflicts evolve along the lines of land based issues and ideologically motivated struggles for self-determination. On the one hand, local conflict mostly related to land has been addressed violently in recent years. On the other hand, the vertical conflicts between the Moro revolutionary fronts and the Government of the Philippines has already trickled down to the community level. Since the all out war in 2000, that affected the region very seriously, the interrelations at the community level have become hostile. Prejudices resulted in stereotypical perceptions of Muslims being seen as MILF fighters, and Christians being accused to be land thieves, part of the ruling class and fighters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). In addition to this shift in attitudes, a massive proliferation of high-powered firearms resulted in high levels of violence within the communities.



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Stage 2: Identify Stakeholders and Support Groups

The Indigenous Peoples (IPs), the Moros and the Christian settlers live in coexist in the three barangays of the Municipality of Carmen, Province of North Cotabato. The two overriding conflict lines evolve along land-based issues and the Moro struggle for Right to Self Determination. On the one hand, local conflicts mostly related to lands have been violently addressed in the recent years. On the other hand, vertical conflicts between the Moro revolutionary fronts and the Government of the Philippines have already trickled down to the community level. Since the all out war in 2000, the hostility between and among peoples within the three barangays, along with the rest of the people from the Region, has elevated into a new level. Prejudices resulted in stereotypical perceptions of Muslims being seen as MILF fighters, and Christians being accused to be land thieves, part of the ruling class and fighters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). In addition to this shift in attitudes, a massive proliferation of high-powered firearms resulted in high levels of violence within the communities.

The main stakeholders of the project “Enhancing Peacebuilding Work in Carmen towards Economic Development” are the displaced Moro (or Bangsamoro) and Indigenous Peoples (Lumad) families from the three barangays Barangays of Langogan, Pebpoloan and Kimadzil. These families were displaced during the conflicts in the year 2000. Many of them stayed in evacuation centers for more than two years prior to returning home.

The residents of Barangays Langogan and Pebpoloan are mainly composed of Maguindanaon people belonging to one of the Bangsamoro tribes, characterized as the Islamized people of Mindanao. Barangay Kimadzil is inhabited by Arumanen-Manobo people belonging to the non-Islamized Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao. Within these communities a set of different stakeholders are identified as; local community leaders, local NGO representatives, police, military, MNLF and MILF officials as well as representatives of the three newly formed PO's: Langogan People's Organization for Peace and Development, Kimadzil Alliance for Peace, and Pebpoloan People's Organization for Peace and Development. Additionally, representatives of different NGOs established an external support group.

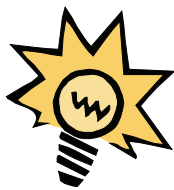
Stage 3: Visioning and Planning

The community-based conflict analysis results showed that access to arable lands was hampered because of the limiting effect of inter-communal conflicts. Those whose farm lands were located along other communities were estranged from their production activities because of their mutual animosity. The Maguindanaons were afraid to cultivate their lands located near the Arumanen-Manubo inhabited communities, and vice versa.

Therefore, the Peace Zones initiative was basically designed to restore relationships between the communities of the Manubo and the Maguindanaons in the three barangays and neighboring communities. Further, it was designed to facilitate the economic coping mechanism while beneficiaries struggled to regain possessions and starting capital for production. Hence, all attempts were directed towards achieving the general objective 'to improve security and the economic situation of these Moro and Lumad communities'.



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The following three major components were designed to help meet this objective:

1. Peace-building

The **Peace-building** component aimed to reduce tensions between communities and among the community people thereby restoring collective action and freedom of mobility. A technical committee composed of Local Government Unit officials and selected community members was formed to draft the Memorandum of Understanding for the declaration of the target barangays as Peace Zones.

This included: Committee Meetings (Peace Committee); Conflict Mapping Workshop; Conflict Resolution Training; Peace Dialogues; Drafting of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); General Assembly, Signing of MoU.

2. Livelihood Development

On the other hand, the **Livelihood Development** component was geared toward increasing productivity of their crops through appropriate technology, and generating savings as capital to sustain production activities. Ninety farmer beneficiaries (thirty of each barangay) were targeted for crop diversification and other income generation activities. Also, the beneficiaries were encouraged to save for the sustainability of their production activities.

This included: Baseline Survey; Farming Classes on Crop Diversification and Farm Management Planning; Provision of Production Fund Support; Savings Orientation/Campaign.

3. Organising

The third component of **Organising** aimed at establishing a mechanism/structure to sustain the benefits of the project. This structure, commonly known as People's Organisations was assisted with capability building trainings and seminars to enhance their potentials or equip them with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude.

This included: Committee Formation; Drafting of Constitution and By-Laws; General Assembly; Conduct Capability Building Trainings (Leadership, Book-keeping, Organizational Management, Savings and Credit Management).

These components were seen as inseparable as they are geared towards gradually capacitating the community leaders and peace movers to sustain their efforts in working towards reducing poverty and transforming local conflicts into indigenous cooperation.



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Stage 4: Engage Stakeholders

Respective communities formed an active part through consultations during the project identification and planning process at an early stage.

Prior to implementation, project staff established a coordination network with all stakeholders. The Barangay and the Municipal Councils were notified, and the plan of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding as basis for the establishment of the Peace Zones was presented to the officials. A process of negotiation and dialogues were undertaken to involve the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police (PNP) as well as MNLF and MILF representatives in order to come up with an acceptable Peace Zone framework. Updates on the development and changes were also frequently relayed to these stakeholders. Eventually, the project was implemented by KFI in close collaboration with the People's Organizations in the Barangays of Kimadzil, Langogan and Peboluan (KAP).

To further strengthen their ownership of the Peace Zone during the implementation stage, the implementing team, the community organizations and the direct beneficiaries of the livelihood inputs jointly conducted baseline surveys, followed by a triangular contracting.



B. Declaration Phase

Stage 5: Agreements and Resolutions (Example Barangay Langogan)

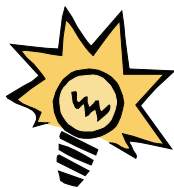
In Langogan the Peoples Organisation (PO) leaders and the barangay leaders drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) after extensive community consultations in order to define a specific kind of Peace Zone that would be called Daru-ul Salaam (Abode of Peace).

To facilitate the engagement and ownership of all relevant stakeholders, this draft was introduced in bilateral consultations conducted by KFI with representatives from MILF, MNLF, AFP, PNP and municipal LGUs. The option of providing feedback and comments on the MoU was offered to all stakeholders at this stage of the Peace Zone initiation phase. A significant comment from the MILF and the MNLF stated that the content of the Memorandum of Understanding went synonymous with the values of their tradition and therefore was appropriate in the local communities. Before the actual declaration of the Daru-ul Salaam the MoU was read in the Madrasha (local Islamic schools) for 7 consecutive Fridays. This effort was made to ensure the community's full comprehension of Daru-ul Salaam and its full ownership.

The primary reason for preferring the term Daru-ul Salaam (as opposed to Peace Zone) is that it is deeply rooted in the Islamic religious belief system.



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Daru-ul Salaam (or "Abode of Peace") describes a place with the following characteristics:

- ▶ Social cohesion and unity among the members of the community;
- ▶ Greater tolerance and respect for other cultural groups;
- ▶ Unity against any form of oppression and social injustices;
- ▶ Promotion of what is good and prohibition of what is evil;
- ▶ Continuing Islamic education and value formation;
- ▶ Improved and more equitable distribution of economic prosperity;
- ▶ More adequate distribution of basic and social services;
- ▶ Peaceful resolution and responsible leadership; sound governance and responsible leadership;
- ▶ Care improvement and ecosystem; respect and promotion of human rights and gender equality; and
- ▶ Fair and quick administration of justice.

Stage 6: Peace Zone Declaration and Community Celebration

During a general assembly 2 of the 3 barangays elected to declare the areas as Daru-ul Salaam or 'Abodes of Peace'. Different stakeholders composed of local community leaders, project staff, representatives of different NGOs, police officers, military, MNLF and MILF representatives signed the peace initiative which shows a strong commitment towards the process.

As a consequence Barangay Pebpoloan was declared Daru-ul Salaam on April 10, 2007. In Barangay Langogan 11 agreements built the basis for the declaration of Daru-ul Salaam that was signed on March 12, 2007, after the Memorandum of Understanding had been presented to all stakeholders for an additional round of feedback and critique. Following the signing of the agreement, a bonding and socialising 'Kanduli' celebration was held.



Photo 1: Declaring "abodes of peace"



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Declaration of a Daru-ul Salaam (Translation)

We, the Muslims living in Barangay Langogan, Municipality of Carmen, North Cotabato, are united and cooperating for peace and development. As a proof of our aspiration to make our barangay peaceful and progressive, we declare our barangay as Daru-ul Salaam. Related to this we appeal for the following:

1. Manage and resolve any misunderstanding by peaceful means.
2. Bring the cases to the Barangay officials so that they can be resolved and violence can be mitigated.
3. Promote peaceful relationship and co-existence within and among residents of the barangay and with neighboring barangays.
4. Avoid display of arms inside the barangay except for the members of the Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO) and the Barangay Tanod (watchers).
5. Let us unite against all groups that may cause havoc and division.
6. All groups operating in the barangay should work hand in hand to find lasting solutions to the economic, cultural, political and social problems.
7. Form a group / association that will be a center for friendship, cooperation, and coordination of different organisations, agencies, non-government organisations and people's organisations.
8. There shall be a continuing education and learning on peace, understanding and unity. This is to strengthen the relationship of all organisations and residents.
9. Firing of arms without the permission of the responsible officials is prohibited. Violators will be sanctioned with the following: a) first offence – payment of PhP 100.00 per bullet; b) second offence – payment of PhP 200.00 per bullet; and c) third offence – payment of PhP 5000.00 per bullet.
10. Coordinate / cooperate with the neighbouring barangays about incidents that would cause rift of relationship between the two neighbouring barangays.
11. We all appeal to all groups to respect the agreements indicated herein. We also hope that this would be respected and supported by all citizens, government units and agencies, as well as non-government organisations. We all continue to work for peace.



*Photo 2:
All sides have to agree to
the abode of peace*



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C. Maintaining Phase

Stage 7: Training and Capacity Building in Langogan

As value added to the project, a capacity building strategy was developed that would enhance competencies of key leaders required for leading positions in respective organizations.

KFI facilitated trainings on peace building, conflict transformation, and mediation skills prior to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. At a later stage, performing PO leaders were trained on peace facilitation, basic organizing and leadership tailored to their individual tasks and functions within their communities.

Furthermore, key workers were also trained on book-keeping and financial management. This training component addressed the need for transparency in financial transactions, and therefore aimed for strengthening the confidence of the community to their leaders.

As an additional contribution to the strengthening of the Peace Zone capacities, local community organizers were offered to gain valuable experiences by assisting and accompanying the project staff in all of their coordination efforts during the entire implementation of the project.

Stage 8: Implementation of Agreement in Langogan

Soon after the drafting of the MoU, it was again presented to the Barangay and the Municipal Council. The enforcement of the agreements however, was then delegated to barangay leaders, PO leaders and Sitio leaders. In the case of Barangay Langogan the leader of the PO (LPOPD) was elected as barangay captain soon after the signing of the agreement. Against this background he could support and enforce the Duru-ul Salaam very efficiently in his new position.

Violations of the agreement were to be settled in the barangay justice system, because it seemed to be reasonable not to create new structures for the implementation of the agreement, but to utilize existing ones. Therefore, the old barangay justice system had to be revived first. KFI assisted in enhancing the existing justice system that often explores three different options for conflict settlement:

- ▶ Traditional justice system,
- ▶ Barangay justice system and
- ▶ Consultation of elders.

Until today these three conflict settlement mechanisms are applied and the barangay leaders are now in charge of enforcing the Daru-ul Salaam Declaration.



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Stage 9: Strengthening the Peace Zone Structure

Shortly after the signing of the agreement, functional committees were formed by the People's Organisations as support structure for the newly founded Daru-ul Salam:

- 1) The Peace and Reconciliation Committee was tasked to analyze the community situation in peace and order matters; to be a source of encouragement for the members; to settle conflicts and to link itself to other organisations.
- 2) The Livelihood and Project Committee representatives were chosen by the majority of the respective PO and their responsibilities are to lead the members in developing ways to improve the organisation and to come up with income generating projects.
- 3) The Finance Committee was tasked to oversee all the finance transactions of the organisation.
- 4) The Education Committee members were chosen by the majority and were tasked to lead the education drive for peace, explain the value of their culture, and to disseminate farming technologies.

In order to enhance the organisational structure of the three POs and as an attempt to pool their resources together, an umbrella organisation was formed - the Kimadzil Pebpoloan Langogan, Inc. Under this umbrella structure the organisations were able to mobilise sufficient funds for registration at the Securities and Exchange Commission. Furthermore, this alliance of the three POs aims to broaden their linkages to other Government Line Agencies and NGOs.

Stage 10: Monitoring

Originally the newly founded POs were assigned to monitor and enforce the Daru-ul Salaam declaration in the Barangays Langogan and Pebpoloan, but no institutionalised monitoring system could be implemented. In order to strengthen the informal and weak monitoring mechanisms, trainings were conducted by KFI. But as all contributions to enhance the internal monitoring capacity appeared to fail, KFI changed its strategy and took over the monitoring function as an external body. Although this was a good solution at the time, the monitoring structure still remains weak and needs to be improved.



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D. Sustaining Phase

Stage 11: Evaluation, successes and lessons-learnt

KFI conducted the impact assessment and evaluation of the project in conjunction with the POs and barangay leaders. It has been found that the project facilitated the formation of people's organizations and fostered peace-building and livelihood development. As a consequence residents of Langogan and Pebpoluan have declared their barangays as Daru-ul Salaam (abode of peace) while the Arumanen in Kimadzil have been consistently seeking dialogue to reach a resolution to their conflict with the Maguindanaons.

In retrospect, Daru-ul Salaam had shown considerable impacts, because displaced people came back and felt safe in the barangay after the implementation of the Daru-ul Salaam declaration. The restoration of relationships between the Arumanen-Manobos and the Maguindanaons has started to take its roots. Even though the majority in the barangay are Muslims, also Christian community members feel safe and move around freely now.

Furthermore, Christians are also committed to Daru-ul Salam and follow the agreement, although it is based on Muslim principles. In case of violations of the agreement, conflicts could be settled immediately and were solved by means of the barangay justice system. Another positive effect of the declaration of Daru-ul Salaam can be seen in the increasing assistance from NGOs that offered support for various development projects after peace and stability were restored in the region.

The evaluation however, has also shown that there are still a lot of **challenges and problems** that need to be tackled.

Generally, the Daru-ul Salaam structures are not yet as 'strong' and effective as they should be. The declaration is not mainstreamed in the LGU planning; neither barangay nor municipality officials have passed formal resolutions in accordance with Daru-ul Salaam. Although the agreement was acknowledged by all respective political entities, the option of drafting an ordinance in support of the agreement has not been considered yet. But there is an emerging need for such a formalisation, especially against the backdrop of the backlashes in peace negotiations on the national level. Additionally, a change in leadership on the barangay level could possibly take place in the near future. Therefore, a formalised resolution is urgently needed, since there is no institutionalised guarantee for acceptance of and support for Daru-ul Salaam by successive LGU leaders and their administration.



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The **women's lack of participation** and engagement in the whole process of Peace Zone development is an area that needs further study and improvement. Whereas women should have a considerable stake according to the concept of Dar-ul Salaam, no female community member has been involved at any of the above described stages. This is partly due to the traditional role of women in community structures. However, in future Peace Zone creation processes, should take on the role and participation of women need as a core principle. In this manner their voices are heard and their potentials in society as active facilitators and peace-builders are maximized.

The community emphasized that the poverty reduction / socio-economic development aspects should support the peace efforts as a confidence building strategy, the latter has not received as much attention as the first one. Much of the gains of the **livelihood component** is muddled by the issues of high transport costs due to bad road conditions and debt problems due to high incidence of usury within these farming communities. These factors aggravate the economic hardships experience by the families in Barangay Langogan.

One of the **unintended results** that the project created in Barangay Langogan is the increased and higher expectations of the communities for more projects and greater funding from KFI and donors. Comments such as "You brought us somewhere through the processes we've taken up. Now we are here, don't leave us alone" presented communities' reluctance or lack of confidence to go further in terms of managing or maintaining gains of the Daru-ul Salaam declaration.



Stage 12: Expansion and Replication

Some valuable lessons can be drawn on the Peace Zone initiative in the Municipality of Carmen, North Cotabato:

- ▶ Peace education should form as an integral part to all the peace building measures and initiatives. The Key leaders should be trained for effective and efficient leadership while younger and second liners shall also be developed to continue, maintain and sustain the Daru-ul Salaam Peace Zone. Further, external assistance should appropriately address the capacity building needs of the people.
- ▶ The failure to declare the peace Zone in Barangay Kimadzil, requires further study, assistance and follow up should be undertaken. A continuing process of education, dialogue and negotiation is necessary in order to move the process forward.
- ▶ Additionally, women as a potent force for peace-building, should be capacitated for them to be able to engage effectively in community and social activities. More venues where women could participate meaningfully should also be provided.



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- ▶ Barangays should also develop stronger networks and links with its neighboring barangays. This could become a good platform for concerted action on an intra-communal level. Such expansion and networking efforts could enhance communication and help resolve conflicts that may arise in the future.
- ▶ KFI evaluation showed that there is a need for historical documentation of all actors in the area to understand the root causes of the conflict better and to further develop appropriate interventions. A regular conflict analysis and updates regarding the situation of the newly declared Daru-ul Salaam in Langogan and Pebpoloan is also seen necessary. This could as well monitor the ongoing peace talks between GRP and MILF to keep all stakeholders on the community level informed about recent dynamics on the barangay and the national level.
- ▶ With the incremental successes of the Peace Zone within the context of the three pilot barangays, many representatives of neighbouring barangays are very interested in adopting the concept of Daru-ul Salaam in their communities. The benefits of Daru-ul Salaam, proven by lessons learned from the stakeholders in Langogan and Pebpoloan, seem to be evident and attractive to a number of organisations in the conflict regions of Mindanao.

However, even though there is an interest in replication, one particular obstacle appears to hamper these attempts of expanding the geographical coverage of this particular Peace Zone approach: representatives of neighbouring barangays expressed concerns about working with NGOs like KFI. They would prefer to cooperate directly with the leaders of the two barangays who successfully established Daru-ul Salaam in Langogan and Pebpoloan.

This reaction clearly illustrates the limitations of external assistance from support groups, such as local or international NGOs. It also underlines the necessity of community based approaches to Peace Zone creation and the crucial principle of ownership.



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